

# **News Release**

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### **New CRP Enrollment Opportunity Benefits Wildlife Habitat on 27,700 Acres in Iowa Sign-Up Started May 1, 2008**

Des Moines, Iowa: May 7, 2008 –Iowa landowners in three environmentally sensitive areas will soon have the opportunity to enroll up to 27,700 acres of land in a new Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) practice called SAFE, which stands for State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement. Sign-up started May 1, 2008.

SAFE is a wildlife management tool that helps state and regional agencies, non-profit organizations, and others to address local wildlife objectives through habitat restoration. SAFE gives conservation partners the flexibility to create projects and install conservation practices that target the specific needs of high-value wildlife species.

“Under SAFE, participating landowners will receive rental and incentive payments in return for improving habitat for important species including grassland dependent birds, ring-necked pheasants, songbirds, upland game birds, and waterfowl,” said Derryl McLaren, State Executive Director of Iowa Farm Service Agency (FSA). “SAFE offers a unique opportunity to enhance critical habitat for species important to Iowa.”

“This is a stellar opportunity for landowners to reverse the downward trend in meadow larks, bobolink, quail and other wildlife,” said Lyle Asell, assistant for agriculture at the DNR. “Creating habitat is the key to rescuing these species by restoring our grasslands, wetlands and forests.”

According to McLaren, there is no competition for enrollment, and land need not meet any erodibility criteria. Land is eligible to be enrolled if it meets crop history requirements and can support the type of habitat needed for the species of concern.

Land entering the CRP for the first time will be eligible for a signing incentive payment of \$100 per acre and a practice incentive payment of 40 percent of the cost of practice installation, on top of the normal CRP annual rental payment and 50 percent cost-sharing for practice installation.

Under SAFE, project partners determined geographic areas where enrollment of farmland in CRP would benefit threatened, endangered or other high priority species. Project partners then developed conservation proposals that included enrolling land in the designated geographic areas in CRP using existing CRP practices for the benefit of specific wildlife. SAFE projects require a sponsoring agency which will be the Iowa Department of Natural Resources or Conservation Districts of Iowa.

## **The three approved SAFE project areas in Iowa are:**

**Grand River Grassland** is sponsored by: Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Iowa Farm Service Agency (FSA), Iowa Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Pheasants Forever, The Nature Conservancy, Iowa Audubon Society, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, Ringgold County Conservation Board, and Ringgold County Soil and Water Conservation District. This project covers the Kellerton Bird Conservation Area in Ringgold County and includes 4500 acres. The purpose of the project is to restore habitat for grassland dependent birds by converting cropland or existing CRP into high quality native grasslands

**Gaining Ground for Wildlife** is sponsored by: Iowa DNR, Iowa FSA, Iowa NRCS, USFWS, Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, The Nature Conservancy, Iowa Audubon Society, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, Iowa County Conservation Boards, Conservation Districts of Iowa, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS). Project covers 19,700 acres in portions of all counties with the exception of Allamakee and Clayton. The purpose is to restore native grassland/wetland habitat for songbirds, upland game birds, and waterfowl.

**Habitat for Early Successional and Neotropical Migratory Forest Birds** is sponsored by: Soil and Water Conservation Districts, CDI on behalf of the 4 counties, Iowa FSA, Iowa NRCS, Iowa DNR--Wildlife and Forestry Divisions, IDALS--Division of Soil Conservation, Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development. Project covers 3500 acres in Allamakee, Clayton, Fayette and Winneshiek counties. The purpose of the project is to produce habitat for bird species showing decline by using hardwood trees, bottomland timber establishment on wetlands, and shrub/grass plantings.

In all SAFE projects, the sponsoring agency is required to do long-term monitoring to report the success in increasing the numbers of targeted species. Contracts offered will range from 10 to 15 years in duration. Maintenance and required management practices at certain points during the life of the contract are included and must be performed by the participant.

For additional information regarding the Iowa SAFE projects, contact your local FSA, Iowa DNR, or NRCS office.

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